

cross-canada briefs

Eleventh hour deal prevents faculty strike at Memorial

BY DAVID COCHRANE

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (CUP) — Students at Memorial University can finally concentrate on their studies instead of worrying about a possible faculty strike.

On Feb. 6, nine months of bitter labour disputes came to an end when administrators and faculty members at Memorial University reached a tentative agreement in their contract negotiations.

Jason Churchill, a fifth year History major, said he didn't care about the exact terms of the contract. He was just happy the labour problems were over.

"I don't care who came out on top," said Churchill. "I just care that the semester can end. A lot of us had a lot riding on it."

The agreement must still receive approval from the university's Board of Regents and faculty association's general membership, but both negotiating teams are recommending the contract be accepted.

"I think [the agreement] will maintain the quality of education at Memorial," said Chris You, a member of the faculty's negotiating team. "The bargaining process worked."

Details of the agreement will not be released until it is officially ratified by both sides.

The new deal came hours before the faculty association's deadline for strike action and at a time when student anxiety was at its highest.

The two sides have been trying to come to some sort of a settlement since May of last year. Both sides hope this deal can give Memorial three years of labour peace until it expires in 1999.

University still writing off O&Y losses

BY CRAIG SAUNDERS

REGINA (CUP) — Four years after the financial implosion of real estate giant Olympia and York, the University of Regina is still cleaning up the monetary debris.

In December of 1991, the U of R invested in unsecured commercial notes and secured notes, as part of O&Y's plan to bail out their failing empire.

A total of \$2 million was invested by U of R in the sagging company. The investment was secured on a \$300 million first mortgage on the Toronto Stock Exchange building. Secure as that may seem, it has not kept the university from losing big.

At the same time as the O&Y failure, the Toronto real estate market crashed.

Unfortunately for the university, the market has not picked up, and the TSE building has been listed for sale at a bargain basement price.

"The property is going to be sold," said John Allan, U of R vice president, in an interview earlier this month.

This means that the U of R could get back \$1 million of its \$2 million investment.

The million dollar loss on the U of R's investment accounts for a significant share of the university's \$2.5 million deficit.

"Being somewhat conservative, we have written this thing down by \$1 million," said Allan. "That certainly hurts a bit."

Allan maintains, as he did in August, that the investment looked like a good investment at the time, and was rated within the university's investment limits.

CFS losing ground in Atlantic Canada

BY DAVID COCHRANE

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (CUP) — One of Canada's national student organizations has come a step closer to losing its foothold in the Atlantic provinces.

During the last week of January, students of the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) held a referendum and voted in favour of leaving the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), further weakening the organization's strength in the region.

UPEI is just the latest school in a long list to cut its ties with the federation.

Since 1989, Atlantic schools such as Dalhousie, University of New Brunswick, and St. Francis Xavier have all decided to leave the CFS. Only Memorial University of Newfoundland has had a referendum that resulted in continued membership.

Fidel Murphy, vice president of the UPEI student council, said that the council held the referendum to see if the CFS was still a good fit for UPEI.

"We wanted to see if a lot of the views held by the CFS were still in line with those of the students of UPEI and if we felt our money was being wisely spent by the CFS," he said.

Guy Caron, National Chairperson for the CFS, said that UPEI will no longer be able to lobby as effectively now that the school has left the CFS, and that students were misled by the federation's opponents.

The CFS will have to face more membership referenda in the next several months. Shippigan, Saint-Louis-Maillet, and St. Andrew in New Brunswick; Acadia University and Mount St. Vincent University in Nova Scotia; and, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Newfoundland, will all go to referendum early this year.



GAZETTE PHOTO BY DANIELLE BOUTREAU

Coburg Great Taste shuts doors

BY GAZETTE STAFF

Many students and coffee-holics were shocked and dismayed on Wednesday, Jan. 31, to discover that one of their favourite coffee shops had gone out of business.

The Great Taste Coffee shop on Coburg Road — which also housed Fader's Drugs and a post office — closed its doors despite what appeared to be a healthy customer turnout and good sales. Meanwhile, a Great Taste Coffee shop on Spring Garden Road has been sold to a Mr. Williams, a previous owner.

Rob (last name unavailable), the owner of the two Great Taste shops, had gone into receivership which one Great Taste employee, who wished not to be identified, said was due to poor business practices and gross mismanagement.

The employee claimed that Rob was not a good businessman and had a habit of letting bills pile up, and not paying them.

"People weren't getting paid," said another employee, who also requested anonymity. "Rob was collecting debt and not taking care of it."

If not for the sale of the downtown location, Rob may have lost the two stores and fallen deeper into debt, explained one employee.

"We were beginning to get suspicious up at Coburg," said the employee.

The employee alleged that "expensive inventory was being taken by Rob...food orders were being paid in cash, and staff were receiving cash instead of a pay cheque."

Rob leased the Coburg location from Vern Butt, who continued to operate his pharmacy from within the store.

Several staff members commented that they knew Rob and Butt were not getting along, and that the two were close to separating the business arrangement.

On Tuesday, Jan. 30, after the Coburg store closed for business, Rob allegedly entered the store and cleared out items such as Espresso machines, coffee grinders, bulk coffee, and expensive syrups.

One employee explained that a friend phoned Butt to say that Rob was there with a van and was clearing inventory. He said that Butt arrived and had words with Rob, and that those words soon developed into a heated argument.

Rob left the shop and transported the inventory to his parent's house.

Employees at the Coburg location were aware that Butt was in poor physical health. Employees claim that the collapse of the business and the overwhelming stress of the situation were too much for him to handle and as a result, Butt suffered a severe heart attack.

An ambulance was called and Butt was rushed to the hospital, but died later that night.

Due to the closure, eight staff members were laid off. They have yet to receive any pay and the Labour Board has been notified and is taking action on behalf of the employees.

"I've only received half of what Rob owes me," said one Great Taste employee.

"I gave my all to Rob, and the store. Rob was always really nice to me and bent over backwards for me," the employee continued. "However, Rob is a very underhanded person and he has shown disrespect to staff in the past; hence, the high staff turn-over at both of his stores."

The employee added, "I want to clear Rob of any connection to Vern's death and the rumours surrounding it, but he's a goddamned asshole, and I really couldn't care what happens to him."

The business was sold to Williams who had owned the Spring Garden shop before Rob. He has added a new coat of paint and introduced a non-smoking atmosphere.

"The Spring Garden location is great," said another employee. "Mr. Williams has re-hired five people who were laid off by Rob and we're all really happy here...customers are happy and many are actually returning now that they know Rob has nothing to do with the store."

Rob could not be reached for comment.

Senate quibbles over Reading Week

BY DANIEL CLARK

The last Senate meeting marked the last gasp of Frosh Week as Senate voted to synchronize Dalhousie's start date with those of Mount Saint Vincent University and the Technical University of Nova Scotia.

At the meeting this past Monday, members raised the issue of coordinating Dalhousie and Saint Mary's University's Reading Weeks.

One concern was that Dalhousie's spring break currently coincides with university spring breaks nationwide.

Chris Lydon, Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) Vice President Academic argued sarcastically, "If we are going to such lengths to cooperate with other (Metro) universities at the cost of other things, then perhaps this is something we should immediately do."

David Cox, DSU President, was not present at this Senate meeting; however, he has announced that he will take the issue of Frosh Week to the Board of Governors meeting next month.

At Sunday's DSU council meeting, Cox said he was unhappy with the Senate's decision regarding Frosh Week and implied that there was a connection between the length of Frosh Week and the DSU's planned Capital Contribution of \$1.3 million to the school.

In all, the Senate meeting was extremely uneventful. It took less than thirty minutes from call-to-order to adjournment. There was a ten minute delay as Chair Colin Studdard waited for the meeting to achieve quorum (the required attendance, without which the meeting would be invalidated).

"I'm not surprised they had trouble meeting quorum with an agenda like this," said student Senator Drew Campbell.